

Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee

February 23, 2009

**HOUSE BILL NO. 6490 AN ACT CONCERNING COORDINATION OF VACATION SCHEDULES
FOR TOWNS PARTICIPATING IN PART-TIME INTERDISTRICT MAGNET PROGRAMS**

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleishmann and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Kim Stroud and I serve as the assistant director of the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, an Interdistrict Magnet School operated by the Capitol Region Education Council. Accompanying me today is Executive Director of CREC Bruce Douglas and Principal of the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science Eric Bernstein.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Education Committee concerning proposed House Bill 6490 - Coordination of Vacation Schedules for Towns Participating in Part-Time Interdistrict Magnet Programs. This bill is intended to enable students who attend magnet school programs and local schools, each on a part-time basis, to have a "true vacation," rather than having their two schools on different schedules.

I have been at the Arts Academy for 15 years and the Assistant Director for the past nine years. As Assistant Director one of my responsibilities has been to develop the Academy calendar. In that capacity, I am very familiar with the coordination of vacation schedules. The impact of this proposed bill would require the General Assembly to regulate start and end times, as well as the vacation schedules for all school districts throughout the state of Connecticut for purposes of satisfying vacation schedules at part-time magnet programs.

Most frequently, the Academy vacation schedule corresponds with the vacation schedules of the sending districts and in planning the Academy calendar, calendars from sending school districts are always considered. For the 2009-2010 school year, for example, five of more than 50 partnering districts have different vacation schedules.

Secondly, to assure success of any students that do have different vacation schedules, yearly planning for part-time programs at the Arts Academy and the Math and Science Academy, take those differences into account. CREC encourages families to take the vacation of the home school district with no penalty to the student. Families are notified several times throughout the school year that vacation conflicts will be accommodated. The academies provide students with access to the curricula prior to the vacation and individualized support upon return if the student deems necessary. In addition, the teaching faculty adjusts instruction to limit the volume of new material presented during the affected weeks, especially in classes with any

significant number of affected students. The vacation schedules do not disrupt students' educational programming.

Lastly, the schedule of the academies extends beyond the school day dismissal time at any local district schools. Students attending the academies part-time have several hours of additional instructional time each week compared with students solely attending the local school. This extra instructional time provides the flexibility to ensure that we meet the needs of all students, even if they have a vacation schedule conflict.

We appreciate the committee's consideration of matters that may impact the quality of the education available to every student and to the issues that affect students at magnet schools, in particular. We will continue to work to meet the needs of all students and provide a unique, high quality learning experience to every student at the academies. Thank you.